



TACIR

The Tennessee Advisory Commission
on Intergovernmental Relations



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Commission Members

FROM: Cliff Lippard
Executive Director

DATE: 30 January 2026

SUBJECT: Public Chapter 418, Acts of 2025 (Housing Juvenile Offenders)—Final Report for Approval

The attached commission report is submitted for your approval. It was prepared in response to Public Chapter 418, Acts of 2025, which directed the commission to study (1) the availability of facilities for housing juveniles who have been adjudicated delinquent and placed in custody of the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) or who have been detained by juvenile courts prior to an adjudicatory hearing, and (2) whether there is a need for additional housing, detention, and treatment facilities in Tennessee. In response to members' comments, staff added information clarifying that Madison County's proposed \$70 million juvenile justice center includes space for a juvenile court and clerks' offices in addition to a 40-bed detention center. Staff also added information on national trends and best practices for the size of juvenile detention centers, as well as the capacities of new facilities planned or recently built in other states.

The findings and recommendations of the report remain unchanged:

- For post-adjudication capacity, the report finds that currently funded projects, when completed, will likely meet the state's capacity needs. The General Assembly has appropriated more than \$333 million for three new facilities.
- For pre-adjudication capacity, **the report recommends that the state help fund a new juvenile detention center for West Tennessee, provided that a share of beds in the facility is reserved for temporary placements for juvenile offenders in DCS custody.**

- Beyond these capacity improvements, it would be beneficial to build more oversight into the juvenile justice system. **The report recommends that the General Assembly (1) require juvenile detention centers operated by local governments to be licensed by DCS and (2) authorize the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth and/or DCS to levy financial penalties on pre- and post-adjudication facilities that violate state or federal requirements.**
- Research has shown that alternatives to detention can be cost-effective and reduce recidivism. Increasing access to and use of community-based rehabilitative programming could be beneficial to youth in the justice system and the communities in which they live. **The report recommends that (1) the General Assembly further increase recurring funding for the Juvenile Justice Reform grant program and that (2) juvenile courts that don't already use formal detention risk assessments consider using them to guide their decisions about detaining children prior to adjudication.**